

STAT

Veteran Auto Salesman Admits He Stuck Himself in Buying Car

By Leslie H. Whitten
Staff Reporter

Harry S. Keels, 44, who has been in the automobile business for 20 years, admitted yesterday he came out second best in a deal for a 1958 Cadillac with Nationwide Motor Sales.

Keels testified before the Board of Appeals and Review that is hearing Nationwide's appeal against the District's refusal to grant the firm a dealer's license. The veteran car salesman said Nationwide salesman Constantine N. Pappas told him April 28, 1961, that the tires on the Cadillac were new.

But, said Keels, he had three flat tires in the first three days and discovered the tires were recapped. "Don't you know a good auto when you see one?" asked Board Chairman Robert T. Smith.

"I thought I did," said Keels ruefully.

Keels, a salesman at Loving Chevrolet, Silver Spring, said

he never would have bought the car if he had known the tires were recapped. But he said Nationwide, at 12th and K sts. n.w., made repairs on the car so it would pass inspection and that he later referred a customer to them.

He said, under cross examination by Nationwide attorney Bernard T. Levin, that he did not think his allegations were enough to warrant withholding of Nationwide's license.

Another witness, Lawrence E. Williams, 28, a Central Intelligence Agency administrative assistant, said he was told that a 1961 Volkswagen he bought at Nationwide on Jan. 28, 1961, was new but that the clutch gave out after 10,000 miles. Williams said the speedometer showed only 13 miles when he bought it, but that the seal on the speedometer cable was broken.

Williams said he was given a 90-day warranty and took the car back four or five

times to have a discharging generator and a grinding reverse gear fixed. Although he was not charged for the repairs, said Williams, he was not satisfied with them. He paid \$1958 for the car and sold it eight months later for \$1200 as a trade-in, he said.

On a third charge, Assistant Corporation Counsel Erwin A. Alpern presented evidence to show Francis Thibodeau, a Nationwide Salesman, sold two cars 18 days before he applied for a car salesman's license. Levin countered with a letter from Nationwide dated the day before the sales advising the District Thibodeau would be selling cars.

One of the 10 charges against Nationwide was dropped by the District, and the Board refused to allow the District to bring nine new allegations. Levin has denied all the charges. The hearing is scheduled to continue today at 2 p. m.